

# MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

**- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -**  
**Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad**

Sunday, January 31, 2010

**Iraqis Surge to Atlanta Poultry and Feed Shows** – Over 30 private Iraqi buyers traveled to the International Poultry Expo and a related feed show in Atlanta, Jan 27-29. The group also participated in several American Soybean Association seminars. Iraq imports of U.S. poultry were over \$70 million in 2009 and there is strong commercial demand for corn and soybeans. Iraqi interest in these shows is easily explained: Iraqi per capita poultry consumption is just one-third of surrounding countries; Iraqi oil revenues are expected to triple in the next 5-7 years; and the population of 30 million is growing rapidly.

**ASTA Steps Up To Help Iraqi Seed Trade Association** - Eleven Iraqi Seed Trade Association members traveled to the American Seed Trade Association's, 'Vegetable & Flower Seed Conference' in Las Vegas, Jan 23-26. In addition to gaining exposure to the latest seed varieties and closing commercial deals, the Iraqi buyers learned from ASTA about membership services, lobbying, and other hallmarks of how a successful industry organization can function in a democracy. Iraq severely restricts seed imports, a policy that Iraqi importers and USDA are working to change.



**Stampede! Iraq Is Open To U.S. Beef** – The last vestiges of Iraq's 2004 BSE-related ban on U.S. beef appear to have been overcome. On January 27, the Ministry of Agriculture confirmed Iraq would accept a generic FSIS export certificate (Form 9060). This follows a Health Ministry decision on January 13 to allow U.S. beef. Commercial conditions include: 1) the slaughtered animal be 30 months or less; 2) no mechanically deboned meat; and 3) other documentation requirements, such as Halal and a certificate of origin. USDA/Baghdad is now targeting poultry importers to begin building the market for beef liver and boxed beef for what we hope will become a \$20 - \$30 million market.

**Increased Iraqi Grain Acreage and Enough Rain So Far** – Analysis by USDA's Office of Global Analysis Weather indicate early crop conditions during the winter grain season have been favorable. Iraq's wheat and barley acreage is also up significantly after two years of drought. However, the overall MY 2010/11 grain production outlook is still in question because a sizable portion of the crop (43% wheat; 62 % barley) is not irrigated and reliant on rainfall. USDA/Baghdad will publish complete estimates in March.

**Iraq Buys More U.S. Wheat** – While the U.S., after a banner year of wheat exports in 2008, was shut out of the Iraqi market in terms of delivered wheat in 2009, January 28th the Ministry of Trade announced the results of its latest tender. Of the 700,000 MT recommended for purchase, 100,000 MT is U.S. origin. Assuming this result stands, Iraq will have contracted to purchase as much as 300,000 MT since November 2009.

**Personnel Update** – There are currently 36 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, or embedded with U.S. military units.

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